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Approved For Release 2006/08/02 : CIA-RDP80B01676R001700180047-6

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NSC REVIEW COMPLETED, 6/26/2003

17 October 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

1. On Monday evening, 15 October late, I was informed that the latest readout from Cuban U-2 photography indicated initial deployment of Medium Range Ballistic Missiles. I immediately authorized the dissemination of this information on a very limited need-to-know basis to USIB members and their immediate commanders. On Tuesday morning at 11:45 I attended an NSC Meeting at the White House which included the President, Secretary Rusk, Secretary Ball, Secretary Martin, Secretary McNamara, Secretary Gilpatric, General Taylor, the Vice President, Secretary Dillon, the Attorney General, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, and myself. I made a preliminary briefing to the group as to what we thought we saw and Mr. Lundahl and [redacted] expanded thereon. At the end of the intelligence portion of the briefing, the group went into general discussion. 25X1

2. Secretary Rusk was greatly disturbed about this new development but pointed out that Mr. McCone had predicted such a possibility back in mid-August. He said that he had been thinking about courses of action and that he had a number of comments to make, along the following lines:

a. A quick-strike surprise attack by air to wipe out these bases;

b. Consideration to expand this into a total invasion to take over the island;

c. We must not operate in a vacuum but must of course pre-inform our allies, at least in part;

d. We should consider making an announcement very shortly and to determine whether or not to call up the Reserves; 25X1

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e. Perhaps we should get in touch with Castro through a third party and tell him it was now or never and that he was selling Cuba down the river by getting involved with Soviet missile bases;

f. We should try to create maximum confusion and not worry too much about the noise level. Here he was referring to infiltration and sabotage efforts;

g. We should review our policy on a provisional government and try to get all the various factions working together. In any event, we must keep Cuba isolated from the Free World although in doing so we must not isolate ourselves.

3. In the final analysis Mr. Rusk felt that we had to either make a quick surprise attack and knock out these bases or to lay on a heavy propaganda barrage in all areas which might cause a withdrawal. Rusk stated that we could not in our thinking separate Berlin and other trouble areas in the world. He seemed deeply troubled and did not seem firm in any of his proposals but appeared to have been boxing the compass as to courses of action.

4. Mr. McNamara pointed out that if we are going to take overt military action, it must at all costs be done on a 100% basis and before any of the missiles become operational. General Taylor pointed out that the element of surprise would be essential but since this would then be a one-shot operation, we should establish an immediate blockade and then look toward invasion although this latter prospect did not enthuse him. He stated that the decision to invade would be the hardest one to make because of the long-time involvements and the lack of any substitute for the Castro regime. Mr. Bundy pointed out that the Soviet decision must have been made early in the summer and that these missiles probably arrived in Cuba at about the time the President was making his policy statements. Bundy thought there was a real possibility that Khrushchev may be confused or misled as to the temper of the American people and the intimate concern we all have over Cuba.

5. The President pointed out that the missiles certainly had to be removed one way or another, and stated that he would meet again at

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six o'clock that evening with his advisers. In the meantime there was much information to be gathered and much analysis to be done as to pros and cons of all the various courses of action. He authorized as many U-2 flights as needed to get full, complete, 100% coverage of the island. He asked for a report on the latest analysis of just what the thinking toward Cuba is in Latin American countries as well as NATO as to any action the U. S. might take; some unanswered questions on whether or not to surface the fact that we were making surveillance flights and whether or not to surface this new information; also whether to precede any military action by some form of political pressure action; what would be the effect of military strikes, how long would it take to organize, how many sorties would be required, etc.

Dictated by General Carter on 17 Oct 62.

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